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7 April 1970

DCI BRIEFING OUTLINE  
FOR 8 APRIL 1970SOVIET LEADERSHIP

## I. Soviet collective leadership is well into 6th year.

This is such a change from usual one-man rule in Communist Russia that it is only natural for speculation to spread about possibility of shake-up.

A. Rumors are strong enough so Moscow took unusual step of announcing that several Politburo members are sick--to explain their absence from public view.

1. We know some of them are in fact ill, but question remains whether some of this is political illness.

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1. Some of the younger men seem to be putting themselves forward as modern, purposeful aggressive leaders, ready to cope with problems.

C. Shelepin is one of the leaders who is actually sick, and it's worth noting that during his illness several of his highly-placed supporters

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in information and cultural positions have  
been dismissed or transferred.

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II. Climate for criticism exists. When Khrushchev boasted "We will bury you," he set 1970 as year to overtake United States.

- A. Instead, U.S. GNP remains roughly double Russia's, and absolute gap is growing.
- B. Soviet economy had a bad year in 1969--especially in agriculture.
- C. Current Five-Year-Plan period is ending, and the collective leadership--best known for avoiding or delaying decisions--has to face up to the allocation of critical resources.
  - 1. Investments in industry and agriculture have gotten the short end for several years, and will be in trouble if this continues.

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2. Consumer--partly because of good harvest weather--was spoiled in celebration of Soviet 50th anniversary, and has been promised even more.
3. So far, however, nobody has cut back on military priorities.
4. Somebody will have to take a cut, because there isn't enough to go around, and this should cause some sharp infighting in the Politburo.

D. So far, we see no hard evidence that the Kremlin's problems have reached a showdown stage, and staying in power is what this leadership does best, but it is safe to say that the collective is under more strain than it has ever been before--including the time of the Czech crisis.

THE SINO-SOVIET DISPUTE

- I. Sino-Soviet dispute 10 years old.  
Each country now clearly considers the other its most pressing foreign policy problem.
  - A. Each looks at actions by the other mainly in Sino-Soviet context.
    1. Peking views SALT talks as U.S.-Soviet collusion against Communist China.
    2. Soviets are worried over resumption of U.S.-Chinese talks in Warsaw.

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B. Peking talks in sixth month with no sign of progress and practically no sign either side contemplates compromise.

L. Each is so image-conscious they give their side of dispute to visiting statesmen from third countries--and we in turn get reports.

2. These indicate essence of deadlock is differing objectives.

3. Chinese want to "cool" the border by pulling troops back 100 kilometers--essentially, the elimination of Soviet military pressure.

4. Soviets want to put the whole dispute in low key, normalize diplomatic and trade relations to some extent. To this end, Moscow wants to begin by settling or at least papering over some of the border squabbles that have caused fighting.

C. Both sides are resuming hostile propaganda, suggesting that hopes for any settlement are dim, but that each hopes to avoid blame for downgrading or ending the negotiations.

Military Situation

II. Reflecting this bleak outlook, both sides--particularly Soviets--continue to build up military forces along the border.

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- A. Soviets have more than doubled strength facing China since 1965.
  - 1. They have about 300,000 men, not counting 75,000 border guards.
  - 2. About 30 divisions--half of them combat ready. Nearly 600 combat aircraft, 200+ helicopters. Scaleboard mobile missiles, which can fire nuclear warhead about 500 miles.
- Forward deployment into Mongolia.
  - New Military District opposite Sinkiang.
- B. Chinese have stepped up air defense preparations, positioned more fighters near border, added some tanks.
  - 1. They have about 600,000 men in military regions touching Russia and Mongolia, but most of them are in garrison well back from frontier.
- C. In any major military clash, Soviets would clearly have superiority.
  - 1. They have capability to deliver sharp response, or undertake limited offensive in border area, but would probably want to reinforce before trying any large-scale ground operations into China.

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THE MIDDLE EAST

I. In the Mediterranean basin, broad strategic concerns are generating new policies and new alignments among the assorted nations of the region, prompted by the growing Soviet presence in the Middle East, the approaching departure of the British from the Persian Gulf, and uncertainty over the future role of the United States.

A. Soviets began moving into Mediterranean 15 years ago, and their aims today are pretty much the same:

--First, to deny region to Western interests, exploiting post-colonial resentment and Arab-Israeli conflict.

--Second, extend their own presence and influence.

B. Soviet naval squadron in Med is currently at record level of about 65 ships: 27 surface combatants, including both helicopter carriers, 13 guided-missile ships, three amphibs; 13 submarines--four nuclear; and more than two dozen auxiliaries.

1. Naval objectives are to show flag; demonstrate support for Arab clients; dramatize challenge to sixth fleet; and develop anti-submarine warfare capabilities against the U.S. Polaris threat.

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C. It is apparent that the Soviets are not interested in any definitive settlement of the Middle East conflict.

1. Their chief opportunities have come from tension and war. It suits their purposes to keep cauldron simmering-- just short of a boil.
2. They do not—however, want another full-scale war, which clients would lose, and until now Soviets have also been careful to avoid risks of direct involvements.

D. Two elements keep the situation explosive: Russians are not sure they can fully control the Arabs, and their need to support Nasir against persistent Israeli air attacks has led to a deeper and direct Soviet commitment.

1. As you know, Soviets are moving in with SA-3 surface-to-air missile system--which has greater capability than SA-2 against low-level attacks.
2. To make this system work, Soviet personnel will have to man it--any probably other air defense elements as well.
3. The Israelis are determined to maintain air superiority over the space between the Suez Canal and Cairo, and will attack any SA-3 sites they find there, whether or not manned by Soviets.

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SOUTHEAST ASIA

I. To conclude with Southeast Asia, as I discuss briefly the situations in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos you will note that they boil down to one problem: Communist North Vietnam.

Vietnam

I. The death of Ho Chi Minh last September created uncertainties which still cloud Communist intentions.

A. His power descended on four men--First Secretary Le Duan, party theoretician Truong Chinh, General Giap, and Premier Pham Van Dong.

B. Analyzing Hanoi is as complicated as Kremlin-watching, but essentially, Le Duan--who has party seniority--in the past has demanded an overriding priority for taking over South Vietnam.

1. The other three have normally favored balance between the war in the south, and the so-called "building of socialism" in North Vietnam. In other words, they

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tended to be more concerned about the cost of the war to Hanoi in manpower and resources.

C. For some months, Le Duan appeared to be in eclipse. He re-appeared as the star of the Communist Party 40th anniversary in February, but curiously, in his long speech, he was singing Truong Chinh's tune--balance, the need for flexibility, and the occasional advantage of giving ground.

II. For whatever such indicators may be worth--and there is no sign yet that Hanoi is ready to talk seriously in Paris, or ease its two basic demands for complete U.S. withdrawal and replacement of the Thieu government--the pace and the style of fighting in the south has dropped off substantially.

A. The Communists are now engaged in one of their so-called high-points, or flurries of activity.

1. Strongest and most concerted in a year.
2. Sharply increased allied casualties.
3. New threat to bases in western highlands, now an ARVN responsibility.
4. But enemy losses also heavy--several thousand KIA-- which runs counter to current economy-of-forces strategy.

B. For the longer run, we believe pace of infiltration is better indication of enemy intentions. Communists

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stockpile replacements well in advance of expected operations, and arrivals indicate that for the first half of 1970, they are sending down half the men they sent in 1969's first six months.

C. Too early to judge outcome of Vietnamization, but for the time being at least, the North Vietnamese are holding their main combat forces in base areas and border sanctuaries, with no sign of any early intention to change the low tactical profile of much of the past year.

Cambodia

I. In Cambodia, the volatile Prince Sihanouk has been ousted as Chief of State in a power play made possible by growing discontent over North Vietnamese and Viet Cong activities on Cambodian soil.

A. Last summer, Sihanouk installed an administration headed by General Lon Nol as Premier and Prince Sirik Matak as Deputy Prime Minister.

1. When he left--as has been his practice--for an extended vacation and medical treatment in France--Sihanouk was aware that Lon Nol and Sirik Matak were not in full agreement with his policies, but he probably felt that in due time he could return, blame them for any problems in his absence, and take over.

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B. Lon Nol and his ministers and military commanders early this year became increasingly incensed over Vietnamese Communist use of Cambodian border areas, and particularly over their support for Cambodian insurgent groups in remote provinces. They decided to crack down.

1. Sihanouk had also applied pressure in the past. The difference was that Sihanouk-- believing that Peking and Hanoi in the long run were going to run Southeast Asia--had always been careful to keep the pressure short of provocation.

C. Lon Nol and Sirik Matak not only ordered more aggressive military sweeps, and shut down the flow of Communist supplies across Cambodia, but permitted Cambodian mobs to sack the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong diplomatic missions in Phnom Penh.

1. Sihanouk by this time was on his way home by way of Moscow and Peking. Lon Nol decided to send an emissary to explain the situation to Sihanouk and ask him to back them up in his talks with Communist leaders.

2. Sihanouk instead made his displeasure public and refused to receive the emissary. This appears to have been the incident that triggered his dismissal.

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D. Sihanouk is now in Peking, calling for an army of national liberation to take to the bush and restore him to power. He will have support from Peking, and particularly Hanoi--how much remains to be seen.

E. The new regime in Phnom Penh will probably be more forthcoming toward the West, but for self-preservation it is stressing its neutral orientation in public, aware that when it comes to military force, it can probably be no more successful than Sihanouk in getting the unwanted Vietnamese Communists out of the country.

1. It has its hands full, in fact, maintaining public order in the border provinces where Viet Cong influence is strong and insurgent assets have been developed.
2. In one early clash, pro-Sihanouk mobs murdered two National Assembly members and a police official who was a brother of Premier Lon Nol.

F. If the Communists decide to stir up as much trouble as possible, security can deteriorate rapidly. Even if the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong stop short of using their own forces, their potential is great enough so that the prospects for the Lon Nol regime are not very bright.

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Laos

I. North Vietnamese forces in Laos, having retaken the Plaine des Jarres, are pushing into the hills to the southwest, with the apparent intention of delivering a knockout punch to General Vang Pao and his Meo guerrilla fighters.

A. War in Laos has been cyclical.

1. Govt and guerrillas move east, north in rains.
2. North Vietnamese send in troops to re-take lost ground in dry season.
3. This year, difference is that Hanoi sent in additional division--now have 67,000 NVA in all Laos (about 20,000 in northern area)-- and Communists have reached their previous positions with two months of good fighting weather left.
4. They apparently want to knock out the Meo guerrillas to eliminate the only effective fighting force Vientiane has.
5. Meos fight to defend their hills around Plaine des Jarres. If these tribes have to be resettled beyond the Mekong, there will be little left to challenge North Vietnamese control of all Laos.

B. At this juncture, Pathet Lao--obviously with Hanoi approval--have put forward what appears to be a peace plan.

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1. Precondition is suspension of U.S. bombing in Laos.
2. In north, air war provides artillery for govt side. If North Vietnamese withdraw, the guerrillas and govt forces could handle Pathet Lao without air support. This could be a quid pro quo.
3. A Communist demand for an end to bombing of the Ho Chi Minh trail, however sets up a direct link to the war in Vietnam.
4. Laotian Prime Minister Prince Souvanna recognizes this, and has stated flatly and openly that this is a matter to be settled by Hanoi and Washington.
5. He has told the Pathet Lao leader--his half-brother Prince Souphanouvong--that he is ready to discuss possible settlements with him, but that even a halt to bombing in the north--around the Plaine des Jarres--would depend on the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces.

C. The problems of Laos and Southeast Asia do not end there.

1. In northwestern Laos, the Chinese Communists in the past year and a half have built a new network of some 130 miles of motorable road.
2. This opens a transportation route from China's Yunnan Province--through the inaccessible Phong Saly region of Laos--almost to the Mekong River,

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which has the Thailand government worried.

3. A branch of the road lacks about 25 miles of making connections with Dien Bien Phu in North Vietnam.
4. There are 10,000 to 11,000 Chinese in Laos-- engineer regiments and antiaircraft troops--but it is our guess that Peking still considers Hanoi the prime mover in Laos.

D. At present, the Communists are talking about restoring some kind of a coalition government for Laos. We have little doubt that in the long run, their intention is to have outright Communist control. As matters stand at present, without outside intervention on the side of Vientiane, Hanoi could take over all of Laos at any time it might decide to commit the necessary troops.

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